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POLITICAL

1. CASTRO Has Busy Week of Public Appearances.

Prime Minister Fidel Castro followed a busy schedule of public appearances this past week, beginning with seven hours of testimony at the Hubert MATOS trial on December 14 (see Weeka No. 50). The next day he addressed the General Assembly of the Sugar Workers for more than three hours. On December 17 he appeared on the nation-wide television program "Ante la Prensa" for almost five hours. This was followed by an address at the General Assembly of the Commercial Workers on December 20, which lasted another two and one-half hours. (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: In these speeches Castro was not as frenetic and abusive as in the past, although he was no less demagogic. The violence was largely replaced by a humorous sarcasm which many interpreted as meaning that Castro was more relaxed and confident. However, in his speech before the Sugar Workers, coming after the assassination attempt against the Minister of Labor, Castro reverted to his more agitated style. (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

2. Fidel Castro on "Ante la Prensa".

As usual Castro ranged over a wide variety of subjects. Of special interest are the following points: (1) although there are elements which would use religion as a weapon against the Revolution, the Revolution has no problems with religious groups since Christianity sprang from the humble people, freedom of worship is respected, and relations with the Catholic heirarchy are excellent; (2) in Puerto Rico today the privileged and reactionaries fight against independence because they want to exploit the people; (3) one of the problems confronting the Revolution is the lack of trained personnel, which is due to the fact that the genuine revolutionaries are to be found more among the common people than among the professional or well-to-do classes; (4) people who panicked and took out their money after Guevara was named to the National Bank are foolish because they do not realize that their money is simply paper which the Government can cancel and re-issue in the form of new bills if it so desires; (5) Cuban agrarian reform is the only agrarian reform which ever started off with increase in production. (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: In attacking the United States on Puerto Rico, Castro followed a recent pattern set by Vilma ESPIN, Raul CASTRO, "Che" GUEVARA and Antonio NUNEZ Jimenez. His growing emphasis on the class struggle theme can be seen in his statements that the true revolutionaries are to be found in the humble classes who unfortunately do not have the preparation to fill government positions efficiently. This carries the implication that the professional classes are not sufficiently "revolutionary" to be counted on to administer the government's program. (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

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3. Prime Minister Addresses Two Labor Meetings.

In his speeches before the sugar and commerce workers the Prime Minister dwelt heavily on the dangers faced by the Revolution. These dangers, he said, originate in the campaign being carried on in the foreign and national press against the Revolutionary Government in conjunction with the active campaigns of the war criminals and the Trujillo agents, aided by the monopolies, to bring about an invasion of Cuba and to spread fear and confusion among the people by acts of terrorism and sabotage. The Prime Minister assured his audiences that these campaigns are doomed to failure and that the Rebel Army, with the support of the people, is prepared to defend the national sovereignty.

In his speech to the Sugar Workers the Prime Minister announced that since there could be no differential paid this year because of the low average world price of sugar he had arranged that a loan of some 4 million pesos be made to the Federation by the Agrarian Reform Institute to be distributed on the basis of 15 pesos to mechanical and 10 pesos to agricultural workers to assure that every worker and his family would be able to enjoy a Christmas dinner.

Conrado BECQUER, Secretary General of the Sugar Workers Federation, in his speech presenting the Prime Minister also spoke of the impossibility of paying a differential this year. While on the subject he also said that should the United States decide to reduce the Cuban sugar quota, the FNTA would request that the Revolutionary Government nationalize all foreign enterprises in the country.

At the meeting of the Commercial Workers the Prime Minister said that economic sanctions will be taken against the counter-revolutionaries. He promised that the Council of Ministers would enact a law which would provide that the goods and properties of anyone engaging in counter-revolutionary activities would be confiscated by the State. (The law was passed by the Cabinet at its meeting on December 21).

The people, he said, must be constantly on the alert and report to the police any suspicious actions or incidents that come to their attention in order that counter-revolutionary activities may be unmasked. (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: For the most part the Prime Minister said in the speeches little that was new. He re-emphasized the theme that the Revolution is facing implacable enemies willing to go to any lengths to destroy it. The foreign and local press, the local newspapers Diario dela Marina and Avance in particular, the foreign monopolies and the United States came in for their customary share of attack.

The Prime Minister's speech before the Commercial Workers was venomous in tone and emotional in delivery. His attack on the so-called upper classes was bitter. Although he and other Government spokesmen have in the past asked that the workers "be alert in protecting the Revolution", this seems to be the first time that he has asked that they should constitute themselves as an organized body of informers. (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

4. Cabinet Approves Series of Important Decree-Laws.

The Cabinet, meeting on December 21, approved a number of laws, several of them of transcendental importance. One of these is a constitutional reform (amendment of the "Fundamental Law" which serves as the Constitution of the country) authorizing the seizure of all property, both real and personal, of persons engaging in "counter-revolutionary activities". According to press accounts of the law, it authorizes the seizure in cases of persons found guilty of such crimes, of those who leave Cuba to avoid action of the Revolutionary Tribunals, and of those who engage in "conspiratorial activities" abroad. The sweeping definitions of what constitutes a "counter-revolutionary crime" are contained in Law No. 425 of July 7, 1959. Another important measure is that establishing a national system of education. This law recognizes the right of private schools to teach religion, but otherwise prescribes that they must conform to the national system. In a related law the Government establishes a system of state-sponsored scholarships for meritorious students who do not have the resources to pursue higher education. The Cabinet also approved a law providing for a pension system covering non-self-employed workers providing a minimum monthly payment of 40 pesos. Another measure contains the regulations governing vacant urban lots which was the subject of a law earlier this year under the Revolutionary Government's urban reform program. (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: The law governing counter-revolutionary activities is a powerful weapon of coercion, particularly when there is no independent judiciary to protect the individual. These and other recent measures are considered characteristic of openly dictatorial regimes determined to retain power and employing intimidation, suppression of civil liberties and extreme action against any opposition in order to achieve their purposes. (CONFIDENTIAL)

5. Activity of the Revolutionary Tribunals.

The Revolutionary Tribunals have recessed for the Christmas season. They are scheduled to resume their activities on January 2. During the past week the following significant actions were taken on this front: (1) in Pinar del Rio two counter-revolutionaries (Luis LARA Crespo and Jose A.V. MORFI) were given the death penalty and the sentence carried out on December 19; (2) United States citizen John V. MARTINO was convicted (it is not known whether on the charge of coming to Cuba to arrange the escape from Cuba of the wife and children of notorious Batista police official Esteban VENTURA, or of peddling bonds of the counter-revolutionary "White Rose" Society, or both) and sentenced to 13 years in jail; (3) United States citizen Austin YOUNG was transferred to Pinar del Rio for arraignment on charges of trying to escape justice; and (4) Fidel Castro, in his "Ante la Prensa" appearance, declared that the case of James BUCHANAN was a matter for the Revolutionary Tribunals to decide. Despite the announced recess of the Revolutionary Tribunals, Buchanan was tried before one of them in Pinar del Rio on the night of December 22. He was found guilty, given a 14 year ~~impris~~ imprisonment suspended sentence, and given 24 hours to leave Cuba.

Comment: The executions of Lara and Morfi are the first to take place since the revolutionary tribunals were reinstituted. The conviction of Martino brings

the number of Americans sentenced by Revolutionary Tribunals to/~~four~~ five.
(UNCLASSIFIED)

6. Formation of Social Democratic Movement.

In the local press on December 17 there appeared articles announcing the formation of a Movimiento Democrata Cristiano. The reports carried the text of the announcement, but indicated no names. The announcement states that the MDC has been formally established and that it is composed largely by young people concerned over national problems. It makes clear that the organization is open to persons of all creeds, races and social levels, except "Batistianos" and Communists. It indicates that the date for the first national congress will be announced soon. (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: The purpose of the MDC is to lay the basis for a liberal political party capable of challenging the Government in any future election. It is designed to offer a new, political rallying point for the young, liberal elements which are increasingly disenchanted with the orientation of the Castro Government and do not wish to associate with any of the traditional political groups. CAS sources indicate the MDC plans to maintain its independence as a political entity, although it may establish working relationships with the Auténticos, Ortodoxos and Aureliano SANCHEZ Arango's "Triple A". (CONFIDENTIAL)

7. Czech Parliamentary Mission Arrives in Habana.

A seven-man Czech parliamentary mission arrived in Habana from Mexico on December 13. In an interview granted to government-sponsored Revolucion, the head of the mission, Josef MALO, expressed the interest of the mission in knowing Cuba and informing the Cuban people of the great sympathy of the Czech people for the Cuban Revolution. Their program of activities has not been announced. They have called on President DORTICOS at the Presidential Palace, and also on Dr. Roa at the Ministry of State. (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: There has been little publicity so far on the visit. Revolucion has given it the most coverage. The Communist daily Hoy has given it no play.
(OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

8. Vilma ESPIN Active on Latin American Women Front.

Vilma ESPIN, wife of Minister for the Revolutionary Armed Forces, Raul Castro has been unusually active this past week publicizing the results of the Santiago, Chile Latin American Congress of Women. On December 16, 1959 she appeared on the television program "Telemundo Pregunta", together with Elena GIL, a well-known Communist, Lia de la ORRIENTE Brau, a prominent fellow traveller, and Dra. Esther Lina MILANES Latin, one of the torture victims of the Batista regime, whose political orientation is not clear. All four formed part of the Cuban delegation to the Congress. On December 21 there was held in the auditorium of the Cuban Confederation of Workers a mass meeting in which Vilma Espin reported on the results of the Congress. The previous day she directed a letter to

Prime Minister Castro, which he read at the Commercial Workers assembly in which she urged the Commercial Workers, a large proportion of whom are women, to join the movement of defense of national sovereignty and progress of the Latin American countries. In this letter she also announced that next January there would be formed in Habana the Comision Permanente de Mujeres Latinoamericanas (Permanent Comission of Latin American Women). (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: This is further evidence that much of the drive for the communist-front Latin American Congress of Women comes from Cuba, and particularly Vilma Espin. (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

9. Visit of Indonesian UN Ambassador.

The Indonesian Ambassador to the United Nations, Ali SASTROAMIDJOJO, was in Habana on December 16-20 as the guest of the Cuban Government. Besides the customary protocolary activities, he held a press conference on December 18. The principal point he made was that Indonesia did not subscribe to the bloc concept, including the formation of a bloc of underdeveloped countries. (UNCLASSIFIED)

10. Cuban Medical Association Elects National Officers.

The Cuban Medical Association held its first national conference since the fall of Batista in Santiago de Cuba over the weekend. Election of national officers took place on December 20. Contrary to expectations, the recently formed, government-sponsored Partido Médico de la Revolución won over the traditional parties by a narrow margin. The new national president is Major Oscar FERNANDEZ Mell. The meeting was a turbulent one according to press accounts. With the revolutionary doctors in control, a majority of the delegates refused to accept the Executive Committee's report on the retirement fund, charging that it covered up a mishandling of funds in connection with the construction of the Medical Building. (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: The new President is a "Che" GUEVARA man, having served as the medical officer for his column during the revolution. The government party lost the Habana provincial elections on December 1 by a considerable margin. In the interim, according to a reliable source, the Government brought heavy pressure on the delegates to the national congress to vote for the revolutionary party slate. Outgoing president Raul DE VELASCO may be in for trouble for campaigning strongly for the traditional parties, and the retirement fund difficulties. (CONFIDENTIAL)

11. Labor Minister's Aide Wounded.

Lt. Edgar ESCALONA, Aide to Minister of Labor Major Augusto MARTINEZ Sanchez was wounded by gun-fire early Sunday morning, December 20. Lt. Escalona was accompanied by Emilio CRIADO Fajardo and Antonio HERNANDEZ Garcia, employees of the Ministry of Labor, both of whom were seriously but not critically wounded in the attack.

According to press reports the three Labor Ministry officials left the Ministry in the Minister's automobile. After parking on a downtown street, they were fired upon from a passing car. Neither the attackers nor the car were identified.

The Government organ Revolucion said that the attackers had mistaken the Escalona for the Minister. Revolucion also said that this attack cannot be considered an isolated incident but "...one episode in a sinister plan forged abroad by the fugitive war criminals, by Trujillo agents, the powerful interests that protect them and carried out by their local accomplices". (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: It has been widely rumored that opposition elements intended to open a campaign of terroristic and sabotage activities during the last half of December. Revolucion's comment in seeing this event as part of a major campaign against the Government conforms to the official line of emphasizing the threat of counter-revolutionary violence which the people must combat. (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

~~EXTERNAL~~

12. Ousted Union Leader Takes, Then Renounces Asylum.

Manolo FERNANDEZ, formerly Secretary General of the Cuban Association of Theatre Artists who was ousted from his position and divested of his trade union rights by action of the Executive Board of the Confederacion de Trabajadores de Cuba (see Weekly No. 50), took asylum in the Chilean Embassy on December 16. On December 21 the newspaper Revolucion front-paged a news story and published a letter from Fernandez to the Chilean Ambassador in which Fernandez formally renounced his asylum and said that he will leave for Venezuela to fulfill certain personal appearance contracts. (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: The "news story" in Revolucion was made up entirely of a vicious personal attack on Fernandez. The very bitterness of the attack is an indication of how damaging the Government felt it was to have as prominent a figure as Fernandez take asylum. It was also evidenced by Castro's oblique reference to the subject in his speech to the Commercial Workers when he emphasized that anyone who wants to leave the country is free to do so and does not need to seek asylum.

In the meantime the CTC is being urged to greater "purification" efforts. At least two other labor figures are known to be in hiding and seeking asylum. (CONFIDENTIAL)

MILITARY

Army:

Negative.

Navy:

Negative.

Air:

1. Aircraft Operations.

a. According to Habana newspapers an unidentified twin-engine aircraft without lights was sighted over Guanabacoa, near Habana, at about 7:00 p.m. on 16 December. Later that night the same aircraft was sighted flying over San Antonio de los Baños. The Cuban Air Force stated the plane did not belong to them.

b. On 13 December 1959 Avance newspaper reported that a FAR B-26 aircraft was fired on from the ground as it flew over the Fifth Military District in Vibora, Habana, without lights. Later "official channels" said the plane was on a special observation flight with its lights off. No one was reported injured. (UNCLASSIFIED)

2. Ex-FAR Pilot Flees Cuba.

On 11 December 1959 ex-FAR pilot Lt. Matías FARIAS and passenger (fnu) HERNANDEZ CAMIOTEA ditched their light aircraft, Cuban registry CUF-725, alongside a Norwegian freighter "FERNHILL" about 70 miles northwest of Key West, after circling the freighter for about an hour. Farias and Hernandez were taken to Tampa on the "FERNHILL". (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: Matias was one of the Cuban cadets receiving pilot training in the U. S. when the Batista government collapsed; he graduated at Reese AFB, Texas in February 1959 and returned to Cuba, where he served with the FAR. Apparently he resigned or was relieved of active duty assignment sometime in the fall of 1959, but he flew on reserve status during the Cienfuegos search in the early part of November 1959. It is believed he was flying with Aero Fumigadora, an agricultural fumigating company, which has FAR connections, at the time of his defection and fled Cuba in one of the company's planes.
q (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

3. "Q" Airline Pilot Seeks Asylum in U. S.

Captain Antonio Michel YABUR JUSTIZ, a captain in FAR acting as pilot for "Q" Airlines in the Habana-Key West run, took refuge in Key West on December 16. Yabur has a long, active revolutionary record. He was also one of the judges who acquitted the Batista Air Force pilots in the first trial at Santiago in February 1959, which brought such an angry reaction from Castro. He had been disaffected with Castro regime for past several months and decided to stay in the U. S. when his associates felt with justification that the Government was becoming suspicious of his activities. (CONFIDENTIAL)

PSYCHOLOGICAL

1. Detention of BUCHANAN Stirs Old Issues.

The Revolutionary press has used the Buchanan affair to flay the old horse of the "press campaign against Cuba", and seems determined to keep the issue before the public on these terms. Using some rather specious reasoning, Revolución indicated that the fact that Buchanan left Miami soon after Austin Young's escape and made his way immediately to a rendezvous with him was proof of Buchanan's involvement in the escape plot, and therefore also in "counter-revolutionary activities" and the "press campaign". Diario Libre, another paper reflecting Government thinking, went so far as to accuse Buchanan of being the "ringleader of a gangster ring conspiring against Cuba".

Other newspapers, particularly Avance, and its editor Jorge ZAYAS, were attacked for advocating Buchanan's release. In the non-Government press, the story is no longer a fresh one and has been largely relegated to the back pages.
(UNCLASSIFIED)

2. Rise in U. S. Sugar Purchases from Cuba Brings Varied Comment.

The announcement that the U. S. will purchase more sugar from Cuba this year than last was front page news in all papers this week. The perennially sanguine El Mundo said the move gave the lie "to the pessimists who thought the quota would be cut", and predicted that the high volume of purchases would be maintained.

The Communist Hoy, using statistics from the Department of Agriculture, maintained that actually Cuban participation in the U. S. market had declined percentage-wise, and that calling the move an increase displayed "confused thinking". It also criticized past "unilateral actions of the U. S. regarding the quota, which have constituted aggressions against our country".

The Government-oriented papers saw the "increase" as proof of the U. S.' dependence on Cuban sugar, and the inadequacy of other producers. They also followed a wait-and-see attitude pending the assignment of quotas by Congress.
(UNCLASSIFIED)

3. Reaction to Ouster of Manolo FERNANDEZ.

David SALVADOR's action at the CTC in ousting Manolo Fernandez as head of the UART (artists) union was sharply criticized by Avance's Jorge ZAYAS. In an editorial titled "Democracy Made in Moscow", Zayas asked how the CTC had the right to intervene in a democratic, free union election. For this he was roundly attacked by the revolutionary press, who termed him a "counter-revolutionary" and attacked Fernandez for trying to disrupt the sacred unity of the Revolution—a favorite rallying cry.

David Salvador also had his say, threatening the "counter-revolutionary press—Diario De La Marina, Avance, and Prensa Libre" with confiscation and the firing squad if counter-revolutionary activity broke out. Prensa Libre called this an "absurd accusation, and a flagrant act against liberty of expression". (UNCLASSIFIED)

4. Bi-National Center Opens in Santiago de Cuba.

A new Bi-National Center was opened in Santiago this week, with approximately 200 people in attendance for the opening. The people present, asked by invitation, were representative of local student, professional, business, and cultural groups. In addition a representative of the provincial commandante was also present.

Initial reaction to the Center has been good, with many inquiries as to its programs, books, etc. Already three English classes are being held, and the director expects this activity to continue to expand. (UNCLASSIFIED)

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